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Sent: Sunday, 16 January 2022 6:28 PM
To: Committee, Migration (REPS) <migration@aph.gov.au>
Subject: Ending Indefinite and Arbitrary Immigration Detention Bill 2021

To: Joint Standing Committee on Migration

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2611

RE: *Ending Indefinite and Arbitrary Immigration Detention Bill 2021*

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute my views to the Committee about this Bill.

I believe this Bill is necessary in order to address the failures of policy and practice in immigration detention which have been occurring over the last decade, under both Coalition and Labor governments. It is the indefinite and arbitrary nature of the current immigration detention regime which has led to the mass 'warehousing' of people in immigration detention centres, and to unjust and cruel treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum.

This Bill provides for systematic, fair treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum while also ensuring safe, secure and efficient border management.

This Bill is urgently needed to rectify the failings of the current system in:

- 1) 1) the suffering that has been inflicted on thousands of men, women and children in immigration detention. These people have been deprived of liberty for many years unfairly and unnecessarily; this will continue endlessly because current legislation offers no alternative. Families have been cruelly separated. Men, women and especially children have suffered severe mental and physical illness and impairment.
- 2) 2) the exorbitant, disproportionate expense to taxpayers. The budget over the next 4 years for offshore detention, of around 200, people is \$4.3 billion. In contrast, the annual cost to allow a person to live in the community while their asylum claim is being processed is only \$10,221 per person.

Although many people might think that this is an issue of the past, it is a real, current and big problem in need of urgent attention. There are now around 200 people effectively in detention in PNG and Nauru; and approximately 1500 held in onshore detention. Most of these people are recognised refugees, and many have no foreseeable resettlement option. Some have been so badly damaged by their experience of detention that they do not have the capacity to be resettled in a third country or to live independently. Australia has a moral obligation and international legal responsibility to offer protection to these people. Yet under the current legislation, all we offer them is a life in detention. We need a more reasonable and fair response to this humanitarian and financial crisis. I believe this Bill and the sound principles on which it is based provide Australia with an effective pathway to improved refugee policy and practice, and to restore its international reputation as a world leader in the treatment of refugees and people seeking asylum.

I urge the Committee to support this Bill.

Yours sincerely,

Eileen O'Brien

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